



The South India CHURCHMAN

The Magazine of the Church of South India

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JOY TO THE WORLD THE LORD IS COME



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DECEMBER 1993

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25 Years Ago!

The most outstanding characteristic of the child is his dependence upon older people. This is more noticeable in the pre-school years, and by the time he comes to school the child is beginning to take a real interest in other children and want their companionship. However, the moment anything goes wrong it is to a grown-up that he will turn, and it is the approval of the teacher that he wants more than that of his fellows. The child needs to think of God as someone who is strong, loving, dependable and understanding and interested in children. The story of how Jesus had time for the children when His disciples wanted to push them aside is good, but it should be so total as to bring out the fact that Jesus was interested in children and did not want to use them merely as an object lesson to adults.

—J. F. FORRESTER, *Churchman*, 1950.

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Future of the Children



Today children face new choices and challenges which no adult has ever experienced. In these days of narrow religious outlook and pseudo-cultural trends it is an imperative for us to prepare our children for the voyage.

The question of assuring future may be viewed from many angles. It could be socio-political, economic, educational, cultural and spiritual. All these factors exert their influence in moulding the younger generation. Yet another important factor is communication. It is a vital link which needs immediate attention. Although many of us accept the importance of communication nothing much has been done and in some areas this does not figure at all. Unless a due importance is given to communication it will be difficult to achieve the expected results.

Community exists through communication. Thus it is individual and social necessity. Communication, if studied properly, is much deeper and has tremendous impact than what many of us imagine. The present communication gap which separates different social strata particularly among the students; the economic disparities which lead to an abject poverty, the political confusion and the exploitative structures, could be bridged through proper communication.

In the traditional caste-based society the self-dignity and future development are highly restricted. Individuals are expected to perform their caste-roles. Thus rigidity of the occupational as well as social structure leads to fatalism which is the root-cause of inertia in our children. This mars the individual future. Christian institutions, especially hostels, offer a new environment, a new vision and new roles to their pupils who come under their tutelage. Thereafter the future depends upon what they

pursue with the training they received rather than the caste or class. This opportunity helps them to become free from the mental slavery. People cannot communicate with each other if they are not free. Communication aimed at community requires an egalitarian spirit, steeped in an affirmation of human dignity.

The future of the children is the future of the society. Here, our vision is enlarged. It becomes our responsibility to 'equip' the children with the skills to communicate effectively what they have learnt and experienced in the schools and hostels. When they go back to their local congregations from which they were drawn, they sing new songs, tell new stories and share the new vision with the rest of the people in the village. This new experience and behaviour should not be at variance with the local culture. It means effective use of media with the communication skills. One of the popular ways of reaching out is through music. In music we find not only the mirror of present society but also a reflection of the future. A good song stirs the soul. It lifts the soul high and wings it with sublime desire. Younger generation is vigorous and that vigour is showing itself in different ways, some of which are definitely in negative direction. Music has great impulses. It can inspire people and thus regenerate a society. Once we the Christians were called as the 'singing community'. This position has to be regained and passed it on to the children which will convert them into a new force and instils a strong will-power in the children, to create a new social order which in turn opens new avenues for the future of the children.

— DASS BABU

Please Pray for . . .

The Twenty-fourth Session of the Synod of the Church of South India

Theme

**THE CHURCH AND ITS MISSION IN A
SECULAR AND PLURALISTIC SOCIETY**

Date : 11 to 15 of January 1994

Venue : Bishop Heber College
Tiruchirapalli — Tamilnadu

Please Pray for . . .

**SOUTH ASIAN
YOUTH IN MISSION**

Work Camp

Theme

WEAVING A NEW COMMUNITY OF HOPE

PLACE : MADURAI

DATE : 5 TO 27 FEBRUARY 1994

A joint venture of

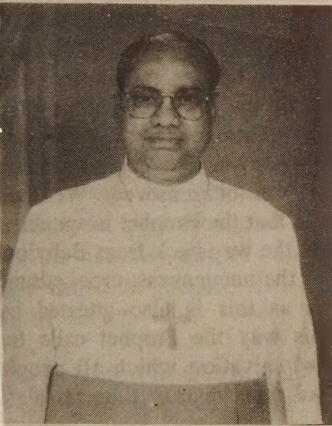
COUNCIL FOR WORLD MISSION — LONDON
AND
CHURCH OF SOUTH INDIA

GREAT JOY TO ALL THE PEOPLE

Luke 2, 10

A Christmas Message from the Moderator

MOST REV. DR. VASANT P. DANDIN



We are passing through a very difficult phase of our life. The social unrest and religious disharmony are threatening the very existence of solidarity of the people. A Country which had given birth to some of the great religions of World — Jainism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism and had produced spiritual wisdom and upanishadic philosophy is passing through a phase of religious fanaticism and bigotry. It is not only in our country but everywhere this madness is found. The whole atmosphere is charged with constant tension mutual distrust, growing violence, ghastly killings of innocent people secessionistic activities, defilement and destruction of religious shrines, bomb blasts and what not. A complete political anarchy moral degradation and loss of social values, as if we have returned to the state of savagery. This is the situation prevailing all over the world. People are thoroughly baffled at these happenings.

Into such a pathetic condition of the world, a situation where everyone is horrified, comes the message, "...great joy which will come to all the people; who is Christ, the Lord", (Luke 2, 10-11).

A striking feature of Luke's gospel is its universal outlook. We had in Matthew an account of the message given of the arrival of the king of Jews to the wise men who were not Jews. In Luke we are told of the message given to the shepherds who were Jews, to each God chose to speak in the language they were most conversant with. These two accounts of the birth of Jesus assert the universal concern of the Father. All the crazy shibboleths of Judaism disappear and Christ appears as the saviour of the mankind. The first barrier is broken down when Jesus on his way to the cross makes no distinction between Jews and Samaritans and is prepared to lodge in one of their villages (Luke 9,52). The age-old feud is made to look ridiculous when Jesus draws his immortal picture of the man who has since become a byword for all good works the good Samaritan (Luke 10,30) — and when he heals the ten lepers, Luke records that the only one to come back to thank was one of the hated, the dalit (17,11). From the very beginning of the gospel, the universal note is struck—peace on earth. The Christ who comes is to be the light who will enlighten the Gentiles (2, 29-32). Throughout the gospel there is this emphasis on the wideness of the Good News.

In the same fashion we will notice Luke's sympathies are all with the poor. This is clearly portrayed in the

Magnificat (Luke 1,46), which approves of princes being cast down from their thrones and people of low degree being exalted of the hungry being filled and the rich being sent away empty. Jesus Quotes as his mission the prophecy that says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he anointed me to preach good news to the poor (4,10). In Matthew where the Beatitudes say, "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (5,3) Luke simply says, Blessed are the poor (6,20).

It is joy to all the marginalised, the neglected and the oppressed to know that saviour is born for them to set them free from the bondage from the slavery and from all ill-treatment of the upper strata. Jesus' birth amply proves that he identified himself with the poor and all the humiliation and hardship that goes with the poverty. His birth in a stable and he being laid in a manger was an instance of the poverty—he humbled himself though he was in the form of God... (Phil. 2)

Jesus is Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed, he is the Lord of all; the sovereign prince, the prince of peace and the saviour. He is born today therefore it is a matter of great joy to all people. It is not to be kept secret, it has to be proclaimed to the whole world. Christmas is not just for those who follow Jesus but for all people specially for those who are struggling who live in misery and our role is to pass on this message a saviour is born today; great joy has come to all of us.

May Christ whose birth we celebrate bless you with peace and joy.

— Vasant P. Dandin.

Prepare The Way Of The Lord

DR. GNANA ROBINSON, Bangalore *

We are in the Advent-Season and, according to the tradition, the Advent time is a time of fasting and praying in spiritual preparation for Christmas, for the coming of Christ in this world. It is therefore appropriate that we begin to reflect on the type of preparation we shall be making during the coming days.

The purpose of the Coming of Jesus in this world, according to the Gospel, is "that all flesh shall see the salvation of God", which means, that all people shall enjoy the fuller human life as intended by God. In St. John 10:10 Jesus, the Good Shepherd, says "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly". This purpose of incarnation is underlined page by page in all the Gospels in the New Testament. What are we to do by way of preparation for the coming of the Saviour? John the Baptist quotes Prophet Isaiah (40:3-5) and says the following:

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness:
Prepare the way of the Lord,
make His paths straight.

Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill shall be brought
low, and the crooked shall be made straight,
and the rough ways shall be made smooth;
And all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

(Text: Luke 3:4-6)

Sure, the Prophet Deutero-Isaiah spoke in the context of the Babylonian exile of the Israelites, where quite a number of Israelites lived in exile in Babylon and longed for their return to their home-land in Palestine. It may therefore appear that the Prophet was speaking there topographically about preparing a way for the return of the exile, a way through the desert. But it is quite unlikely that the Prophet spoke topographically about a way for people to walk through. First, preparing such a way in the desert was unrealistic and unthinkable; secondly, some of the words used here are never used elsewhere in the Old Testament to describe topographical conditions. The Hebrew word used here for "rough places" is used only here and found no where else in the Old Testament. The Hebrew word used here for "uneven ground" is used elsewhere in the Old Testament in two places and in both the contexts it is not used topographically, but in the

ethical sense of deceit and treachery (see Jer. 17:9, Hos. 6:8). Moreover, the Prophet here speaks not of the way for the returning exiles, but of the way for the coming of the LORD, our God, who comes to inaugurate a new age, a new rule, a new kingdom where every unevenness, crookedness and ruggedness will be removed. We may therefore legitimately conclude that the Prophet is speaking here not topographically about the way back from Babylon, but socio-economically, about the unevenness, crookedness and violence in the society, as this is also attested by other texts in the Bible. This way the Prophet calls for the preparation of the way of salvation which all people with equal privilege can tread on. We may thus translate this text as follows :—

"Every valley (*of poverty and suffering*) shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill (*of accumulated wealth and affluence*) be made low; the ground that has become uneven (*due to bribe and corruption*) shall become straight, and the places which have become rough (*due to exploitation and oppression*) shall become a plain, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

The salvation in Christ means a radical change in the society in-favour of those who need salvation, in favour of the suffering people, the poor, the oppressed and the exploited — a radical change in the socio-economic order, in the outlook of people, in their life-style. This is what was stressed in the Magnificat as well:

"He has shown strength with His arm,
He has scattered the proud in the imagination of
their hearts,
He has put down the mighty from their thrones,
and exalted those of low degree;
He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich He has sent empty away."

(Text: Luke 1:51-53)

It is for this reason that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is said to be "the Gospel of the Poor" — the good news for the poor, the captives, the blind/ the oppressed (Luke 4:18,19). With the coming of Christ, the jubilee year, the acceptable year of the Lord is proclaimed, the year in which all people get equal opportunity to inherit life, that all may see the salvation of God.

* Dr. Gnana Robinson is the Principal of the U.T.C., Bangalore.

It is important to note here that the beneficiaries of God's salvation are designated as "all flesh". You cannot find a better inclusive terminology than this one, "all flesh". The Salvation of God is for all people irrespective of their colour, caste, class, race and gender. The Spirit of God works among all people crossing the man-made boundaries of race, class, colour, caste and religion, preparing them for the salvation of God. This calls us Christians also to cross such boundaries and work for the salvation of God treating all people alike and loving them equally in the same way as Christ loves them.

We live in an uneven world, a world of ups and downs, a world with crooked and rough ways. Through crooked and deceitful ways people are exploited and oppressed — both globally and locally. As a result, the gap between the rich and the poor is widened; some become the oppressors and others become the oppressed. We all become part of this unjust society and we are now called to prepare the way of the Lord. How are we to do it?

Salvation in Christ is not just a one time or one day affair. It is the general condition of life in which all are invited to participate. It is to create this general condition of life that we are called to prepare the way of the Lord — by levelling up the ups and downs of affluence and poverty in the society, making straight the crooked ways of deceit and treachery in human relations, and making

smooth the rough paths of violence and oppression and by reconciling differences.

This calls for both individual and collective decisions and actions. Individually and collectively we have to adopt a life-style that commensurates with the Kingdom of God and also initiate actions that bring the salvation of God nearer to people who are deprived of it.

To John the Baptist, who too understood and interpreted Deutero Isaiah the way we do and proclaimed this message of God's salvation, people asked "What then shall we do"? And we know the type of answers John gave. To the ordinary people he said, "He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none, and he who has food, let him do likewise". To the tax collectors he said "Collect no more than is appointed you". To the soldiers he said, "Rob no one by violence or by false accusation, and be content with your wages".

There is no uniform response in preparing the way of the Lord. Each one of us have to respond differently. But one thing is clear from John's response — our response has to do with the mending of human relations — our relationship to one another. How just and humane our relationships are is something everyone of us has to examine. May God help us during these days of preparation for Christmas to examine our ways and to come closer in human fellowship that all may enjoy the salvation of God equally.

*Wish you a Happy Christmas
and a Prosperous New Year*



The Agony of disciplining and the Ecstasy of reconciliation

BISHOP SAMUEL AMIRTHAM

I am not used to disciplining people. As a Professor and Principal I had to discipline students. But that was to help their formation. As a parent I had to discipline children. But that, I believe, was part of the God given responsibility to nurture them in faith and morality.

As a bishop I am very hesitant to use disciplinary measures. Mainly for three reasons. Adults usually do not change through discipline; Human relations that are sacred get further strained by such actions; Because I believe in the gospel, people need to be given second and third or even more chances for repentance. Human transformation is a real gospel possibility.

In my consecration service, the Moderator charged me, "so be merciful that you may not remiss; so maintain discipline, that you forget not mercy". How does one combine mercy and punishment, compassion and discipline?

But the constitution prescribes that the Bishop should take certain steps in extreme situations. To uphold the constitution, one has to see that members abide it. One can go beyond the constitution to its spirit, but not go against the constitution.

Three friends of mine violated the constitution by going to court and filing a suit against an officer of the diocese. According to the constitution they had to seek internal redressal before they took such an extreme step. Those who do so, constitution says, lose their membership "ipso facto". They were not only friends but leaders in the diocese having served in positions of responsibility for many years. They themselves had used this clause to punish those who erred. They knew the constitution well, but interpreted it to their advantage. Being leaders they thought that one would hesitate to apply the constitution in their cases.

In fact, I not only hesitated but postponed the decision for long. Their arrogance and defiance left no choice. The constitution had to be implemented 'ipso facto'. They were angry and I was in agony. May be they too were in agony.

I myself have been seldom disciplined as a boy. Once while studying in School, I was punished by my mother, for some silly mischief. When father came I complained that I didn't do anything wrong; mother had misunderstood me. Father didn't get angry, but mother realised that, that little crime didn't deserve such big punishment. She started crying. I couldn't understand why. So I started crying too! Father had a difficult job of comforting both of us. I remember, as a big boy, I slept off that night by the side of my mother. The morning was as fresh as ever, with dews of reconciliation in our eyes.

Later I realised the agony of my mother who disciplined me was greater than mine, who received the discipline. I myself experienced that years after when I had to discipline my daughter. She being a cheerful girl and forgets all grudges so soon, couldn't understand why I was agonising so much on that little incident. Her kisses made it up between us.

Well, having removed my three friends from the privileges of membership — I hope I would never ever have to excommunicate any one, for who is me to prevent the only public way of a Christian to receive forgiveness from the Lord, by eating of His body and drinking His blood — and had told all my clergy that they should welcome any one of the three at any time in any church to the Lord's table.

The issue became very complex. The existing groupism became more intense. One group became bitter and wild. Diocesan meetings deteriorated to levels of unparliamentary procedure. I tried again and again to talk to the friends directly and through mediators, with no avail.

I was pained that human relationship between us was getting worse. One of them, a sort of Marxist and I were good dialogue partners on theology and politics. Another a wise churchman whose advice I had sought often. The resultant consequence of the discipline was different from what was intended; The diocese was slipping down to further disunity. Those who were disciplined didn't show signs of regret, on the contrary, showed greater bitterness.

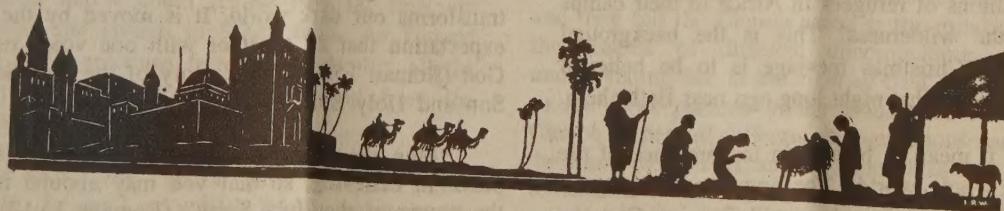
The agony affected even my physical health and mental peace; I couldn't even sleep properly! This period, however, helped me to grow spiritually, closer to God. I was praying, and many were praying for reconciliation.

Then the moment of truth arrived. On the advice of one friend of mine I took one more initiation and wrote a personal letter to the three of them, expressing my pastoral concern and interest in diocesan unity. The miracle happened. Beyond my wildest wish at that time, they responded graciously and positively. The matter was settled a few days, thanks also to well meaning persons of good will.

Then, the joy, the ecstasy! the ecstasy of reconciliation; old relationships being restored. The majority of the diocese so rejoiced; we are able to work together; we have a retaste of joy of repentance and forgiveness in heaven.



*Wish you a Happy Christmas
and a Prosperous New Year*



At the last diocesan council we meditated on the theme, "Church as koinonia" — Among other things, church as a dynamic living reality as in a family. In the church, we are members of the same family, members of the one body we all receive forgiveness from Christ. There is no place then for vindictiveness or enmity.

I told my friends of my agony; they understood. They told me of their agonies; I understood. But now all of us rejoice together. At the recent tea and worship in the unity garden, the ecstasy of such a reconciliation was evident.

This Christmas, therefore, will be unforgettable for us, for it brought peace in a special way to all of us. The Prince of Peace had touched our lives.

WCC Christmas Message 1993

DR. KONRAD RAISER

The following is the full text of the 'Christmas Message from WCC General Secretary Konrad Raiser.

The first addressees of the Christmas message of the birth of the Saviour for all the people were shepherds. The place: an open field at night in a rugged countryside. With fear and trembling they react to the unexpected appearance from heaven. Before they have come to their senses, they already hear the response in the chorus of the angles: "Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace among those whom he favours!" (Luke 2:14)

Christmas — a festival of joy and peace. This is the meaning of our tradition, and in this spirit Christmas is celebrated in many countries. We can be grateful for the light of Christmas appearing in a dark world. But is this true for all the people?

In Angola and Bosnia, in the Caucasus and in Kashmir, there will probably be fighting even on Christmas day. In Natal and Northern Ireland, on the streets, of São Paulo and Washington, people will no doubt become victims of senseless violence even during this night. "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light" (Isaiah 9:2). So proclaims the prophet Isaiah. Can they really see the light, the millions of refugees in Africa in their camps somewhere in the wilderness? This is the background against which the Christmas message is to be believed today just as it was on that night long ago near Bethlehem.

What does it mean to believe in the presence of the Saviour for the whole world? The angels are saying it: "Glory to God in the highest heaven!" To give God the

glory, to recognize God as the one who holds the whole world in his hands: that means to stop overestimating ourselves, to recognize the true state of our world and to admit our own helplessness. Sometimes it is only with tears that we can give glory to God, or in the cry of lamentation: "How long, O God?" But even out of the depths we can cry in the name of the child in the manger: "Abba, Father!" Giving glory to God is the quiet form of resistance against all false pretences of power, against the tendency to make idols out of our nation or our people, against the spiral of hatred and violence.

"*And on earth peace among those whom he favours!*" We cannot give glory to God without protecting the human dignity of the image of God. Violence against women, racism, ethnic cleansing — each violation of human dignity is at the same time a violation of the glory of God. Where people give glory to God, the spiral of violence is broken and the bud of peace begins to blossom. Often the places are hidden like the manger of the Saviour. To this day the Christmas message is an invitation to go and to search

The ecumenical movement is a common movement of Christians from all churches searching for the places where the light of the presence of God shines forth and transforms our dark world. It is moved by the hope and expectation that all together with one voice may glorify God (Roman 15:6) "to the glory of the one God, Father Son and Holy Spirit".

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13). [EPS]

That They All May Be One

BISHOP JASON S. DHARMARAJ *Deputy Moderator **

Respected Bishop of Colombo and dear friends,

I praise God for this great privilege to be with you this morning as a servant of Christ from South India. I long to Tuticorin and during my boyhood days I had stayed in the sea on the shores of Tuticorin and had heard that Colombo was just a few miles on the other side of the Sea. A lot of my friends and relatives had gone to Colombo often and I had longed to visit Colombo from my childhood. In the late 40s and the early 50s when people travelled frequently between these two countries and many excursion parties were arranged during my student days, I very much wanted to come to Colombo; but I never had an opportunity to visit this country and was only yesterday I had reached Colombo for the first time on the invitation of dear Bishop Rt. Rev. Kenneth Fernando. I am very much thankful to God and I am grateful to dear Bishop for this very gracious invitation to me. When I met the Bishop on 30th May 1993 at the time of the consecration of Bishop Subramaniam Jebanesan of the Jaffna Diocese in St. George's Cathedral, Madras, was much pleased to see both the Anglican Bishops of Sri Lanka, and afterwards when I spoke to both of them felt very glad and I could realise how far they are concerned about the church in South India. As I stand before you I bring greetings from the moderator, all the bishops of the Church of South India, and from the Trincomalee Diocese.

I wish to share with you a few thoughts from John 17, 21. In our Lord's High Priestly prayer to his Father, He prays "*That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.*" This is the verse for the union of the Church in South India. When our Lord Jesus said this high priestly prayer, was just before His crucifixion. As God the Son, the second person in the Trinity, He lived as a man and as God in this World. This was the critical time when He was going to give Himself as a sacrifice and to suffer for the whole mankind to bring salvation to the world. At this time He prayed to God Almighty that His followers might be one, as He and the Father are one.

The Church union in South India which took place on 27th September 1947 holds firm its roots even from the 1890s. The basis of the Church union is the Scripture. When Ziegelbarg and Blutchau landed at Tranquebar in 1706, the Protestant missionary labour began in South India which was followed by the SPCK and other Anglican missionary societies like SPG and C.M.S. Then the missionary societies from different denominations of Europe and the United States sent their Missionaries throughout India on the arrival of William Carey in Serampore. As India is a vast country and divided by caste system, it so happened that the missionary societies approached certain areas consisting of different castes of people and the church was established in different pockets.

In the early 19th century, the Indian Church leaders in South India like K.T. Paul, V. Santiago and V.S. Azariah began to think about the Church in India, they felt that the people of God — "laos" — are more important than the structure of the Church in their denominations. At the same time, they were strong churchmen and were loyal to their own denominations. They also read the Bible carefully and when they read the high priestly prayer of our Lord Jesus in John 17th chapter, it enlightened them and they felt the Church union is the mind of God. Then the leaders of different denominations came to an understanding that *in the sight of God they all were equal as the three persons in the Trinity*. So also, the Indian Church leaders of different denominations had planned on the basis of equality among themselves and this was the foundation of the Church Union in South India.

Bishop Azariah convened a meeting of 33 persons on 1st & 2nd May 1919 at Tranquebar, and he chaired the meeting. Among the 33 persons who had gathered there, only two were Westerners, namely, H.A. Poply, LMS Missionary (an Englishman) and G.S. Eddy (an American YMCA Travelling Secretary), 7 were Anglicans (all Indians) and the other 26 (including the Westerners) were from the South India United Church. Mr. G.S. Eddy, a layman who belonged to the Congregational background, had a great impact on young Azariah's life when he was the Travelling Secretary of the YMCA. Eddy continued his friendship with Bishop Azariah after his consecration as the first Indian Anglican Bishop in Dornakal. At Tranquebar

in 1919, under the Chairmanship of Bishop Azariah, the 33 church leaders firmly decided that they would consider all denominations as equal. The group of 33 jointly published the Tranquebar Manifesto which begins as follows: "We as individual members of the Anglican Communion, and the South India United Church, having met at Tranquebar in the first ministers' conference on Church Union, after prayer, thought and discussion, have agreed on the following statement concerning the union of the Anglican Church with the South India United Church. *"We believe that the Union is the will of God even as our Lord prayed that we might all be one, that the world might believe. We believe that Union is the teaching of Scripture."*" In the life of the CSI, we have completed 46 years of church union life and God has blessed us in all these years with the union of Anglicans, Congregationalists, Methodists and Presbyterians in four language groups in South India with 20 dioceses in South India and one in Jaffna. It is a real spiritual experience now throughout India. One knows well that the Anglican Church has played a notable part in the Church union to have the episcopal church in South India as well as in North India. Some people in the West comment that the CSI is successful to some extent, to serve practical aspects, it is rolling on all these years, and so we have to support this church. But I strongly feel that the Church of South India is not successful on pragmatic grounds. If we have only pragmatism on church union, it will be a failure. We have the strong foundation for the church union on the Word of God that the believers of Christ have to be one in worship, in witness as well as in structure. The Church of South India stands for this witness.

The next important aspect for the basis of Union was the lay participation and their simple faith in the oneness of the Church. In his book — The Church of South India Movement towards Union — Bengt Sundkler (a Swedish historian) points out that there was a dispersion of Christians of different denominations in the latter part of the 19th century and in the beginning of this century from one place to another. Especially the Anglicans from the Tirunelveli diocese went as far as the Baptist area of Ongole in Andhra Pradesh and the Wesleyan Methodist area of Medak. Bishop Azariah as a young man went to Dornakal area as a missionary of the Indian Missionary Society and came in contact with the Methodists and the Lutherans and other denominations in the former Nizam State in Telugu area. When Anglican Christian moved to the congregational areas in Madurai, they felt at home and by this dispersement the lay people left the need for Church union. Even though church leaders like Bishop Waller, Poply, Eddy and Bishop VS. Azariah laid the foundation for the Church union, the Church union in South India was a people's movement.

The Indian nationalism also played an important part in the Church Union. Arya Samaj was formed in 1875, Ramakrishna Mission in 1887, and the Servants of India Society in 1905 which were the symptoms of the rising nationalism which challenged the social conscience of the educated Hindus. The Indian National Congress was formed in 1885 and there was a great awakening of nationalism during those decades. This had an impact and influence to have a united church in South India and the people began to think of a national United Church.

Above all, the 33 persons who gathered together at Tranquebar in 1919 felt that it was a great challenge to have a united witness for Christ in India. The tranquebar Manifesto says, *"We face together the titanic task of the winning of India for Christ — one fifth of the human race. Yet confronted by such an overwhelming responsibility we find ourselves rendered weak and relatively impotent by our unhappy division — divisions for which we were not responsible"*. So on the basis of proclaiming the Good News of Christ to the fellow citizens of India, the Church of South India was formed. By God's grace, we could still witness Christ in the vast country of India and the Church is growing steadily in South India, specially in Tirunelveli, Kanyakumari and South Kerala areas. We have a steady growth in the Church in Tirunelveli area. In recent years Vellore Diocese experienced a people's movement. In our diocese of Tirunelveli, every year about 15 new church buildings are being dedicated and 7 to 10 extended and renovated church buildings are rededicated by me. There is a steady growth in the number of adult baptisms result due to the personal witnesses of lay people

Christians in India are a tiny minority of about 3.5% or at the most 4%. But it is a very energetic and a lively minority group. The important reason for this active ministry of the Church in India is the unity of mind among the believers of all denominations. The recent happenings in the country have united the Christians very much. In most parts of the country from the Roman Catholics to the Pentecostals, the Christians help each other. In the Tirunelveli area, the Roman Catholics and the CSI are very close. The ministry of the Christians in education and in the medical mission is unique. We have involved very much in the social welfare actions recently. The cities like Bombay, Calcutta and Madras have large slums and also the people who are moving towards towns and cities from the rural areas have great needs both physically and spiritually.

There are tribal belts in the central India as well as the lower parts of the northern India where hundreds of villages are inhabited by different tribal groups. These areas were unapproachable during the British period because of lack of roads and the areas were noted for Malaria infection. But now the roads are constructed in the interior parts of the country and the diseases like malaria and cholera are eradicated by the programmes of UNESCO and the World Health Organisation. The people in the tribal area are very backward.

Today in India we have a number of native missionary societies. The Indian Missionary Society which was formed in 1903 is a pioneering missionary society which had its origin in Jaffna in Sri Lanka. Vedanayagam Azariah, the young YMCA Secretary visited Jaffna in 1902. He had intended to establish a native missionary society in India when he saw that a small missionary society was functioning in Jaffna and they had sent a missionary to Thondi near Tanjavur as their representative to preach the Gospel and serve the people in Tamil Nadu. Azariah, as a young man, was challenged by this missionary zeal and soon after he returned back to Tirunelveli he could meet the like minded people in Tirunelveli and formed the Indian Missionary Society on 12th February 1903 at Tirunelveli. This Society has developed so much that at present it has 700 missionaries scattered in 11 States in North India. Only a few days back we had a meeting of the Annual General Body of the Indian Missionary Society. I had served as the General Secretary of this Society for seven

years and now, as the Bishop in Tirunelveli Diocese, I am the Patron of the Society. I praise God that the last year's budget of the Indian Missionary Society was nearly Rs. 6,00,000/- The entire money was raised within India as the IMS has a strong policy even from 1903 as the Indian money, Indian fields, by the Indian workers. The other missionary societies in South India are NMS, FMPB and IEM and there are nearly 50 national missionary societies in India.

The zeal among the Christians and the witness for Christ is growing in India day by day. As Christians in Tamil Nadu, specially those who are living very close to Sri Lanka, we all are concerned about the Church in Sri Lanka. We are very happy that in all the ethnic conflicts the Anglican Church and other denominations in Sri Lanka are very much united and you have felt the love of Christ in helping each other. I am very much delighted to have this fellowship with you all today. Thank you very much.

JOY TO THE WORLD

Joy to the world the Lord is come
Let earth receive her King
Let every heart prepare Him room
And Heav'n and nature sing
And Heav'n and nature sing
And Heav'n and heav'n and nature sing

Joy to the world the Saviour reigns
Let men their songs employ
While fields and flocks, rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy

He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness
And wonders of His love
And wonders of His love
And wonders, wonders of His love

Word Became Flesh and Dwelt Among us

REV. DR. ARUN GOPAL *

And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as that of the only son from the father.

John 1:14 (RSV)

John the evangelist interprets Christ as the Divine Logos or Word — which was believed to be the creative power or energy, through which the whole universe was brought into being. For, in the Greco-Roman world logos was a familiar philosophical category. And, John was keen on using — “flesh” — instead of human being or man to describe the manifestation of the word in human form. He did it deliberately to refute the Gnostic heresy which denied the humanity of Jesus.

Yes, “..the word became flesh...” Jesus became a human being to share what Soren Kierkegaard calls “the predicament of human existence”. Jesus meets the suffering humanity in its powerlessness. His birth in a manger among dumb animals indicates his empowering presence among those caught-up in the “culture of silence” to use the vocabulary of Ivan Illich. Jesus inspires the voiceless to raise their voice for an authentic human life until it is achieved. The word that became flesh challenges us to transform ideas, dreams and statements into actions which can bring hope, to a humanity lost in structures of poverty and injustice. The Christmas season draws our attention to that voice of God which echoes in every human heart calling for a re-ordering of society, where every man/woman can affirm himself/ herself. For, in Jesus Christ a new humanity without caste, colour and sex barriers is inaugurated.

John goes on to say, “and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth;” It is so gratifying to note that Jesus lived in this very world of ours. But, there was something unique and special about his earthly life. As M.M. Thomas remarks he was “a New Man”. Jesus’s life-style did not reinforce belief in the limitations or handicaps of a life

lived in a body of flesh. On the other hand, it revealed its capacities and new possibilities. We read that Jesus moved among people with love and charity (grace). There was also genuineness and honesty (truth) about his life. No wonder the society hated him. But, a world lost in hopelessness and pain needs his healing presence. What a joy it is for us to know that Jesus, is always with us. Bishop Lesslie Newbigin calls him “Jesus Our Eternal Companion”. Nay, he is “Immanuel — God with us”. During Christmas we remember God coming to us as an enabler, showing us the immense possibilities of human life.

In conclusion John says, “we have beheld his glory as of the only son of the father”. In Jesus God comes to reach us where we are; He opens new dimensions of enrichment in our earthly life. Beyond everything the earth has become the arena where God’s glory can be seen and experienced. In spite of its sinfulness human society is chosen to witness the whole drama of incarnation where we see God’s glory in His “kenosis” — self-emptying. Yes, the glory of Christian life is in pouring out our energy or service to usher a life that is truly human in this world, to those who live in inhuman conditions. For, that was the glory of Jesus, the “only Son of Father.” Living in the midst of victims of communal violence, earth-quake and floods, let us make sacrifice and celebration during this Christmas.

Is it not true that Jesus in his compassion for humankind did not mind the horror and agony of the cross? what a delight it was to him to make his abode among the unrecognised people in the society! Yes, the powerless in the world, God’s power, strength and glory are made available. Being one with the suffering people, Jesus continues to reveal his glory — the glory of the suffering God. May God empower His Church to reflect this glory through its witness and ministry. This is the blessing which every Christmas brings to us when the poor and the needy share our peace and joy.

* Rev. Dr. Arun Gopal is the Director of the Department of Christian Education.

Amen.

An Ecumenical Venture

Ms. CONSTANCE M. MILLINGTON, Bangalore

Asian Trading Corporation, 1993, Pages 283.

The Book under review is actually an attempt at constructing the story of the Nandyal Christians from 17 to 1990, — who they are, what happened to them, why did they isolate themselves from joining the ecumenical venture called the Church of South India; who was responsible for the debacle and what are the lessons to learn from the experience of Nandyal for the whole C.S.I. as well as for union schemes to be attempted elsewhere.

Ecumenical Venture such as the Church of South India has been looked at from the viewpoint of achievement or success or to prove the greatness of such a venture to be the very model of true ecclesiology. Benkt Sundkler's *URCH OF SOUTH INDIA*, for instance, is a classic example in this regard. But Millington's work looks at history of the Church Union Movement in South India from the perspective of Nandyal Christians and the ecclesiastical structure there where the schemes of unity agreed at a high level have not been adequately understood or accepted by a particular community loyally committed to its religious tradition. In other words, the author looks at the whole CSI union movement from the perspective of the "Nandyal situation" where it failed.

This doctoral dissertation of Millington from the University of Leeds contains eleven chapters. In the first two chapters, the author introduces the Nandyal area, its poverty and geographical isolation and the Christian missions work in India in general and Nandyal in particular. The third chapter is devoted to Bishop Azariah of Dornakal his work. The important point which the author brings light is that the CSI union idea did not reach the people at the grass-roots level in the Nandyal area where Bishop Azariah, who is considered as one of the architects of the CSI union, worked (p. 21). Another revealing thing is that an Indian ecclesiast did not believe in delegating responsibility, did not encourage Indian leadership in the higher offices of the Diocese (p. 27) and did not give the people of the area the opportunities for full development (28).

In the fourth chapter, the author discusses plans of the CSI, the problem of reordination, the formation of the CSI and then raises the question whether the establishment of the CSI was a hurried one, an attempt in haste (p. 48). The discussions between the CSI and SPG are also dealt with in this chapter.

From Chapter five to ten, the author discusses the Nandyal objection to join the CSI union and highlights

the reasons. In the process, a detailed account of the Nandyal Archdeaconry from 1947 to 1967, the CNI Nandyal Diocese from 1967 to 1973 and the CSI Nandyal Diocese from 1973 to 1990 is provided.

Why Nandyal, a former SPG area, did not want to join the CSI? The author, among others, cites the following reasons: desire to continue in communion with the SPG, ignorance of the true implications of union, financial and family and party jealousies. These factors, the author argues forcefully, were intensified in their impact because of the slowness of action of the ecclesiastical authorities in investigating the problems (p. 91). While the author recognises the contribution made by the missionaries and the Indians who succeeded them in the later years, she nevertheless dares to say that they did not develop powers of leadership amongst many of their converts (p. 237, 240). It is also pointed out that ecumenical education for the diocese at the grass-roots level was not provided (p. 238).

Among others, one of the important conclusions reached is that the CSI union had come too soon. "A longer period might have given (sic) time for the affairs in Nandyal to be sorted out more amicably..." "indicates an undue haste to achieve union" (p. 242, 248). Another important observation is that the Nandyalis attempt to remain as Anglicans was a movement led chiefly by lay people and that it became successful in persuading the Church authorities (p. 245).

Millington's work is relevant as it dispassionately interprets the story and the struggle of a group of Christians within the CSI and, the lessons to be learnt from this study for the present and the future are too many and valuable. A complicated history has been reconstructed with rare understanding and insight and with the accuracy of a careful historian. The views expressed, after careful study and research, on individuals and the incidents and policies of the Mission and/or the Church concerned, are forthright and seem fair to those who were involved. This book indeed is a gift to us and the posterity and a valuable addition to the writings on Church Union in India.

The Bishops, Church leaders, Pastors, students of Indian Church History and all those who care for Christian Unity must read this book as they have much to learn from its pages.

Franklyn J. Balasundaram

Women's Fellowship

MRS. RANI MOSES, President

The Church of South India Women's Fellowship with deep sense of gratitude like to place before you the achievements of Women's Fellowship during the first half of in the Ecumenical Decade. The Ecumenical Decade programme was launched by the former Moderator—the Most Rev. Dr. P. Victor Premasagar in the year 1988 with great zeal. It did not remain only as an intellectual deliberation but with all the encouragement and participation of all the CSI Officers, Bishops, Heads of department, Church leaders and the CSI Women's Fellowship Officers and members brought out tremendous positive results. The overseas friends and visitors expressed great appreciation of the CSI and the CSI Women's Fellowship work and progress in this particular field.

The CSI Women's Fellowship is now no longer remain only as a small praying group. We meet together for prayer and with new vigour and strength we go out as action groups. The CSI Women's Fellowship has been developed like a banyan tree. We have not only developed but directed our branches in all fields of need in the community, like:

- (a) Enrolling more and more young women in the W.F.
- (b) Men and women combined participation in many programmes.
- (c) Network with other groups and denominations.
- (d) Developmental programmes in Socio-economic, theological and educational fields.
- (e) Ministry to build up a new and living community.
- (f) Literacy programme to urban, rural, slum and the tribal areas are some of our ambitious achievements.

We are in the mid-decade. The various concerns identified in connection with the celebration of the Ecumenical Decade with its theme "CHURCHES IN SOLIDARITY WITH WOMEN" has gained considerable attention and appreciation in the whole of Church of South India.

The CSI Women's Fellowship so far could start and run 210 Innovative Pre-Schools in the areas where there

were no schools of any kind. It is a great joy for small children and their parents as this programme had added lot of hope. More than the 6,000 children are the beneficiaries of this programme. Nearly 210-women got employment during this period. It is proposed that 100-more schools would be planned out in the next three years.

We had also started several social and economic development projects mainly for women. We have nearly 35 such projects run by women. This is giving self-reliance, word and confidence. Hundreds of women are experiencing a thrill at this new venture and are building up great hopes for the future in spite of the obstructions of traditions, beliefs and practices. Some of the CSI Women's Fellowship members have produced effective literature on various issues, concerns and experiences. This effort received good response and appreciation.

Apart from our endeavours we also appreciate the fact that the CSI Women's Fellowship General Secretary, Rev. Miss Ivaleen Ammana, is a full fledged member of the synod. Many women are being given place in the committees of the Synod and also at the area, the diocese and even in the pastorate level.

Women's ordination is taking place in many churches. Our Bishops are encouraging and supporting the ordination of women. Where the churches are not allowing women to preach or to be ordained, many of the Bishops and leaders are making efforts to convince such congregations.

The Synodical committee constituted for observance of the Ecumenical Decade has to meet and review the work so far done and plan for the next five years. A celebration on the grand scale for the mid-decade is under the process of planning and preparation. We need your advice, encouragement and full participation.

All the mentioned experiences have become possible with our Lord's guidance and your prayer support. We thank every one of you for your unstinted co-operation.

Indian Church Leaders appeal for Dalit Rights

NEW DELHI (EPS) — A delegation of 21 church leaders presented a memorandum to India's President Shankar Dayal Sharma 20 August asking for passage of bill to eliminate discrimination against Dalit ("untouchable") Christians.

The church leaders asked for an amendment to the Presidential Order of 1950 that would give Dalits the rights previously extended to other groups.

"We urge the President of India to use his good offices to move the government of India at this opportune time, as we celebrate the 46th anniversary of our independence, to ensure prevention of discrimination of Dalit Christians, whose minority status requires the government's protection, by introducing an official bill to amend the Presidential Order of 1950", the memorandum said.

Eliminating this discrimination, it concluded, would increase India's credibility in international forums and before the people of the world, contributing to greater economic progress of India".

A report on the meeting with the president was given a press conference the following day by Sydney Rebeiro, president of the New Delhi YMCA and senior vice-president of the National Coordination Committee for Scheduled Caste Christians.

The group that presented the memorandum, a press release from the New Delhi YMCA said, was "perhaps most significant and high powered delegation" of Christian clergy and lay leaders in India.

In addition to Rebeiro, it included Bishop Anandandu Lal of Amritsar, moderator of the Church of North India; Bishop M. Azariah of Madras, Church of South India; Catholic Archbishop S. Michael Augustine of Pondicherry and Cuddalore; George Pereira, a priest who is secretary general of the Catholic Bishops Conference of India; James Massey, general secretary of the Indian Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge and rector of the Dalit Solidarity Programme; Sadhona Ganguli, general secretary of the YWCA of India; Ipe Seph, secretary of the National Council of Churches in India; Henry Thiagaraj, convener of the Dalit Christian

Solidarity Forum, and representatives of other communions and groups.

The news release explained that the 1950 Presidential Order on protection of "scheduled castes" did not make the provisions available to Christians, Buddhists or Sikhs. Amendments extended protection to Sikhs in 1956 and Buddhists in 1990, but Christian Dalits have not received the benefits given to the others. "A study of the atrocities perpetrated against the Dalits all over the country reveals that the Dalits of Christian origin suffered most", the memorandum to the president said.

It said discrimination against Christian Dalits violates provisions of both the Indian constitution and the Human Rights Declaration of the United Nations. It also cited a statement of the Indian Supreme Court in a 1992 case that removing protection for those Dalits who changed from Hinduism to some other faith would undercut the basic purpose of the legislation.

Mahatma Gandhi, "the father of our nation", was quoted as declaring that the "taint" of "untouchability" would remain for all those in the caste, regardless of religion, until it was removed from Hinduism.

The assertion that Dalits who become Christians thereby become privileged persons is "a misconception based on biased views", the president was told. Although some upper caste Christians are prominent in institutions such as hospitals, 95 per cent of the Dalit Christians live in rural areas and endure the same social and economic conditions as other Dalits, the memorandum said.

"The urban elitist Christian institutions reflect the progress of the converts from the upper caste communities and not the reality of rural Dalit people, who cannot enjoy the benefits of these prestigious Christian institutions of the cities," it said.

Since 1950, it said, Christians have made numerous appeals for a change in the law, and have received many promises of action from government officials, including prime ministers. "Yet nothing has happened till now", it said. "Already 43 years passed with empty promises, while our people languish in deprivation". [EPS]

Focus On Children In Asia

CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE: AN UPDATE

Education Newsletter No. 2, 1992 carried the report of the ecumenical consultation on this topic held in Moscow in June 1992. The consultation made several recommendations. One called on the Churches and the WCC "to assist in the sponsorship and planning of consultations and training programmes on the development of curricula and curricular materials and resources, according to the needs of the different Churches...."

In response the WCC's Programme Unit II - Life, Education and Mission has developed a project to be implemented in stages over the next few years. Initially it will focus on Russia and the western Slavic nations of Ukraine, Belarus, Poland and the Czech and Slovak republics in the following five stages:

1. Preparation of a clear profile of the Christian education needs of each participating country and identification of prospective trainees for curriculum and leadership development (January-June 1993).
2. A symposium for prospective Christian education leaders and curriculum writers on contemporary problems and issues in Christian religious education in the specific context of the region (February 1994).
3. Training workshops for curriculum Planning and Development with on-site experience in educational programmes in one or two western countries (July 1993).
4. A teacher training programme for users of the new curriculum (Beginning July 1994).
5. A training workshop for writers and developers of educational textbooks and resources (February 1995).

The "southern" territories of Albania, Armenia, Bulgaria, Georgia and the former Yugoslavia all present special challenges requiring specific responses.

Qualified resource persons versed in the socio-cultural and religious background of the region will be recruited to work on specific aspects of the project. Dr. Constance Tarasar, well known Christian Educator of the Orthodox Church in America, is the first such resource person to be appointed, and will serve on a part-time basis for two years. Overall coordination is being provided by the staff of Unit II.

Plans are also afoot for the 43rd Graduate School of the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey in 1994/95 to deal with an educational theme with particular concern for the needs of the Churches in Eastern Europe and Third World

countries. The theme will be announced in a forthcoming issue of the Education Newsletter. This decision is a direct response to another of the Moscow recommendations.

A third response to Moscow was the setting up of a Christian Religious Education network to strengthen the links between eastern and western European churches in the field of Christian education.

The European Conference on Christian Education (ECCE) c/o Swiss Sunday School Union, 8415 Berg am Irchel, Switzerland, has agreed to serve as the Coordinating Centre of a Christian Religious Education Network in Europe for the next few years.

The network will have five aims:

- (1) To exchange information about Christian Religious Education.
- (2) To support exchanges of students/teachers by sharing information about needs and possibilities for such exchanges and providing financial help.
- (3) To encourage the setting up of small Christian Religious Education centres in countries where they do not exist to house books and materials useful for Christian Religious Education. These centres could be accommodated in already existing church or church-related facilities.
- (4) To promote a small business section. Each centre would be free to make proposals for buying or producing materials related to Christian Religious Education to the Coordinating Centre, which would inform the network of each proposal. If others are interested in participating in the project, it should be possible to obtain lower prices for everyone by joint production.
- (5) To provide financial help for specific activities. Requests would be received at the Coordinating Centre, who would try to find the necessary resources.

Each participating centre must have a clear address and a contact person.

All enquiries should be addressed to Mr. Walter Sennhauser, Secretary, Swiss Sunday School Union at the above address.

The first response to this invitation has come from the Teachers' Training College of the Hungarian Reformed Church which has offered to serve as an ecumenical centre for Christian Education in Hungary. The address is: c/o Mrs. Sarolta Fodor, Teachers' Training College of the Reformed Church, 5 Hősök tere, Nagykőrös, H-2750, Hungary.

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